

Message Text

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INFO USMISSION GENEVA

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TOKYO 15643

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: ELAB, JA, PINT

SUBJECT: RIGHT TO STRIKE OF GOVERNMENT WORKERS BECOMES MAJOR
POLITICAL ISSUE

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

SUMMARY LONG SIMMERING ISSUE OF GRANTING RIGHT TO
STRIKE TO PUBLIC CORPORATION EMPLOYEES-PRINCIPALLY
RAILROAD AND POSTAL AND COMMUNICATIONS WORKERS--HAS
SUDDENLY APPEARED ON POLITICAL FRONT BURNER.
ALTHOUGH ISSUE SMOLDERING SINCE OCCUPATION BANNED
STRIKES BY ALL PUBLIC WORKERS, IT GIVEN NEW LIFE BY
FORMER PRIME MIN TANAKA'S SO CALLED PROMISE IN 1973
(IN MIDST OF SERIES OF ILLEGAL CHAOTIC RAILWAY
STRIKES) THAT GOJ WOULD MAKE DEFINITIVE RECOMMENDATIONS
ONE WAY OR OTHER BY LATE FALL 1975. AS DEADLINE
APPROACHES, GOVERNMENT APPOINTED EXPERTS COMMITTEE
HAS STEPPED UP PACE OF HEARING AND ALL AN SUNDRY,
INCLUDING MEDIA, SPEAKING OUT ON ISSUE. WHILE
MANAGEMENT REPS OF PUBLIC CORPORATIONS HAVE RECOMMENDED
THAT THEIR EMPLOYEES BE ALLOWED TO STRIKE UNDER
CERTAIN CONDITIONS, LDP SPLIT 3 WAYS ON ISSUE WITH
EXTREMIST RIGHT WING OF PARTY VOCIFEROUSLY OPPOSING
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ANY CONCESSIONS TO UNION. JSP AND SOHYO PLANNING

TO WHIP UP ISSUE EVEN FURTHER BY STAGING
STRIKES OF PUBLIC CORPORATION EMPLOYEES JSUT AS
UPPER HOUSE PREPARES TO VOTE ON PRICE HIKE BILLS IN
LATE NOV. ISSUE THEREBY COULD PROVIDE EXCELLENT
AMMUNITION FOR ANTI-MIKI FORCES IN LDP
IN FACE OF THESE CHALLENGES, MIKI AND HIS SUPPORTERS SO FAR
ADOPTING CAUTIOUS POSTURE, WITH MIKI INVOLVING LDP
VICE PRES SHIINA PERSONNALLY IN ISSUE. NEXT BIG
HURDLE WILL BE GOJ'S HANDLING OF RECOMMENDATION WHICH
EXPERTS COMMITTEE EXPECTED TO ISSUE IN 2-3 WEEKS.
END SUMMARY.

1. WITH LOWER HOUSE PASSAGE OF CONTROVERSIAL POSTAL AND
TOBACCO PRICE HIKE BILLS AND LDP'S NOT TOO GENTLE BURIAL
OF ANTI-MONOPOLY LEGISLATIONS, LONG SIMMERING ISSUE ON
GRANTING RIGHT TO STRIKE TO PUBLIC CORPORATE EMPLOYEES--
PRINCIPALLY NATIONAL RAILROAD, POSTAL AND TELEGRAPH
WORKERS--NOW ON POLITICAL FRONT BURNER.

BACKGROUND

2. STRIKE ISSUE IS LEGACY OF OCCUPATION. ALTHOUGH GHQ
UNDER GENERAL MACARTHUR GRANTED ALL JAPANESE WORKERS RIGHT
TO STRIKE, ON EVE OF THREATENED FEB 1947 GENERAL STRIKE HE
ISSUED ORDER FORBIDDING ALL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES FROM
WALKING OFF JOBS. DIET WROTE GHQ RULING INTO LAW WITH
PASSAGE OF PUBLIC CORPORATION AND NATIONAL ENTERPRISE LABOR
RELATIONS ACT IN 1948 BANNING STRIKES IN SUCH BODIES.
SOHYO LABOR FEDERATION KEPT ISSUE ALIVE DURING 1950S AND
60S WITH INTERNATIONAL APPEALS TO ILO AND ICFTU AND DEMAND
THAT DIET RATIFY ILO CONVENTION 87 (GUARANTEEING) WORKERS
FREEDOM UNIONS HAVE UNILATERALLY DEFINED AS EXTENDING TO
RIGHT TO STRIKE AS WELL) WHEN LATTER APPROVED BY DIET IN
1965, GOJ SET UP ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO RECOMMEND
MODIFICATIONS IN
RELATED DOMESTIC LABOR LAWS. AFTER DELIBERATING FOR
YEARS, ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORTED IN FALL OF 1973
THAT IT COULD NOT AGREE ON SINGLE RECOMMENDATIONS.
SOME MEMBERS FAVORED MAINTAINING ABSOLUTE
STRIKE BAN. OTHERS ADVOCATED DENYING RIGHT TO
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STRIKE ONLY TO WORKERS (E.G. RAILROAD AND POSTAL
EMPLOYEES) DIRECTLY AFFECTING LIVES OF MILLIONS OF
PEOPLE DAILY. STILL OTHERS WILLING TO GRANT
CONDITIONAL RIGHT TO STRIKE TO ALL PUBLIC CORPORATION
EMPLOYEES. SOHYO UNIONS MADE "RECOVERY OF RIGHT TO
STRIKE" MAJOR THEME OF ITS SPRING 1974 "STRUGGLE" AND
EFFECTIVELY DEMONSTRATED ITS ABILITY TO PARALYZE
RAIL TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS IN SEVERAL SHORT

ILLEGAL STRIKES. TO AVOID ADMINISTERING ADDITIONAL SEVERE SHOCK TO JAPANESE ECONOMY IN WAKE OF OIL CRISIS, TANAKA GOVERNMENT IN RETURN FOR SOHYO PROMISE TO HALT ILLEGAL STRIKES AGGRED IN APR 1974 TO SET UP CABINET LEVEL COMMITTEE WHICH WOULD EXAMINE STRIKE ISSUE AND MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS BY LATE FALL OF 1975. CABINET COMMITTEE IN TURN ESTABLISHED COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS WHICH HAS BEEN HOLDING HEARINGS SINCE SUMMER 1974 AND IS SCHEDULED TO ISSUE REPORT IN MID-NOV. ISSUE WOULD THEN BE BACK IN LAP OF CABINET COMMITTEE.

3. PRESENT UPROAR SPARKED WHEN PRESIDENTS OF NATIONAL RAILWAY CORPORATION (JNR) AND TELEPHONE AND TELEGRAPHIC CORPORATIN FIRST TESTIFIED BEFORE EXPERTS COMMITTEE EARLY TIS MONTH THAT TEY WOULD REFRAIN FROM MAKING EXPLICIT RECOMMENDATION ON GROUNDS ISSUE TOO POLITICAL AND THEN COMPLETELY REVERSED THEMSELVES BEFORE A DIET COMMITTEE A FEW DAYS LATER BY ENDORSING CONDITIONAL RIGHT TO STRIKE. LDP LEADERSHIP INFURIATED BY SPECTACLE OFGOVERNMENT APPOINTEES SUDDENYL TAKING CONTROVERSIAL POSITION PUBLICLY WITHOUT PRIOR CONSULTATION WITH PARTY OR GOJ. OPPOSITION PARTIES CHARGED GOJ WITH CENSORING FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION. SOHYO UNIONS THEN CLAIMED THAT 20 MEMBER EXPERTS COMMITTEE STACKED AGAINST LABOR AND CALLED ON ITS REP, FORMER SOHYO SEC GEN AKIRA IWAI, TO RESIGN. SOHYO AFFILIATED COUNCIL OF PUBLIC WORKERS UNIONS (KOROKYO) HAS NOW CALLED FOR 3 DAY STRIKE ABOUT NOV 20 IN EFFORT OTO PRESSURE MIKE CABINET INTO TAKING POSITION FAVORABLE TO UNIONS ON ISSUE. PRIME MIN MIKI TOLD PRES CONFERENCE ON OCT 25 HE WOULD TRY TO FULFILL TANAKA'S COMMITTMENT TO ANNOUNCE GOJ

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ACTION EA-09

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 TOKYO 15643

POLICY BY END OF NOV. HOWEVER OTHER PILLARS OF MIKI REGIME, INCLUDING LDP SEC GEN NAKASONE AND LDP VICE PRESIDENT SHIINA, ARE NOW PUBLICLY ADVOCATING THAT GOJ DELAYS ITS DECISION AS LONG AS POSSIBLE AND IN ANY CASE UNTIL AFTER LDP REACHES CONSENSUS ON ISSUE. AT SAME TIME, SHIINA HAS ANNOUNCED THAT HE ATTEMPTING TO REPLACE VARIOUS LDP BODIES DEBATING THIS POSITION WITH SINGLE COMMITTEE. IN ORDER TO PROMOTE CONSENSUS WITHIN RULING PARTY.

THE HEART OF THE LABOR PROBLEM

4. IN FACT, 8 PUBLIC CORPORATION UNIONS, PARTICULARLY THOSE ON NATIONAL RAILWAYS (KOKURO AND DORO), HAVE BEEN STAGING ILLEGAL STRIKES SINCE 1948. RESULT HAS BEEN DISMISSAL OR FIRING OF STRIKE RINGLEADERS AND WIDESPREAD FINES AND WARNINGS LEVELED ON RANK AND FILE, MOST STRIKES TO PROTEST THE PUNISHMENTS, AND A CONTINUING VICIOUS CIRCLE OF WALKOUTS BY UNION MEMBERS AND RETRIBUTION BY MANAGEMENT.

5. BOTH SIDES WOULD LIKE TO BREAK THIS CYCLE BUT FOR DIFFERENT REASONS. TREASURIES OF UNIONS, ESPECIALLY KOKURO AND ZENTEI (POSTAL WORKERS) BEING DRAINED BY
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PAYMENTS TO MEMBERS WHO HAVE BEEN FIRED OR SUFFERED PAY CUTS BECAUSE OF INVOLVEMENT IN ILLEGAL STRIKES. MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC ENTERPRISES ANXIOUS TO NORMALIZE LABOR RELATIONS IN ORDER TO ENLIST UNION SUPPORT IN REVAMPING RAILROADS AND ELIMINATING FEATHERBEDDING IN THE POSTAL SYSTEM. IN ADDITION, JNR CONCERNED THAT EVER INCREASING MILITANCY IN RAILWAY UNIONS OVER STRIKE ISSUE MAKING IT BREEDING GROUND FOR EXTREME RADICAL SENTIMENT.

POLITICAL RAMIFICATIONS

6. THE LDP REPORTEDLY IS SPLIT THREE WAYS ON ISSUE,. APPROXIMATELY A THIRD OF LDP DIET CONTINGENT (INCLUDING FORMER AND INCUMBENT LABOR MINISTERS, DEPUTY PRIME MIN FUKUDA AND PRIME MIN MIKI) ARGUING PRIVATELY IN FAVOR OF GRANTING RIGHT TO STRIKE IN SOME FORM ANOTHER THIRD INDIFFERENT AND

STILL ANOTHER THIRD (INCLUDING EXTREME RIGHT WING SEIRANKAI MEMBERS) VIOLENTLY OPPOSED TO ANY CONCESSIONS TO WHAT THEY REGARD AS DANGEROUSLY RADICAL SOHYO UNIONS. SEIRANKEI MEMBERS, IN FREQUENT MEDIA APPEARANCES, RECALLING VIOLENCE ON THE RAILROADS DURING OCCUPATION PERIOD AND RAISING SPECTER OF POLITICALLY MOTIVATED STRIKES PARALYZING JAPANESE ECONOMY.

7. MORE IMPORTANT THAN MERITS AND DEMERITS OF THE ISSUE ITSELF IS ITS POTENTIAL FOR CONTROVERSY WITHIN THE LDP. THE ISSUE COULD PROVIDE EXCELLENT AMMUNITION FOR ANTI-MIKI FORCES WITHIN THE LDP (MAINLY IN THE TANAKA AND OHIRA FACTIONS) SHOULD THEY DECIDE THE TIME IS RIPE TO MAKE A MOVE TO UNSEAT HIM.

8. THE OPPOSITION--PARTICULARLY THE SOCIALISTS--SEE THE ISSUE AS PROVIDING THEM WITH MULTIPLE BENEFITS. IT IS NO COINCIDENCE THAT THE JSP-SOHYO AFFILIATE KOROKYO HAS NOW MOVED UP ITS SCHEDULE OF WALKOUTS ON THE TRAINS AND IN THE POST OFFICES TO NOV 20, IN HOPES THAT DATE WILL COINCIDE WITH UPPER HOUSE VOTE ON THE CONTROVERSIAL PRICE HIKE BILLS. JSP APPARENTLY BELIEVES THAT IF DIET THROWN INTO TOTAL DISARRAY BY STRIKE ISSUE AT CLIMAX OF EXTRAORDINARY SESSION, PRIME MIN

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WOULD HAVE ONLY TWO OPTIONS OPEN TO HIM TO AVOID LEGISLATIVE DEFEAT--MAKE A MAJOR CONCESSION TO THE UNIONS ON THE STRIKE ISSUE OR OPT FOR DISSOLUTION AND GENERAL ELECTIONS. THE JSP IS NOW WILLING TO RUN RISK OF DISSOLUTION.

9. IN THE FACE OF THESE CHALLENGES, MIKE AND HIS SUPPORTERS SO FAR ADOPTING CAUTIOUS POSTURE. HE HAS ALREADY CROSSED ONE HURDLE SUCCESSFULLY BY PLACING ON LDP VICE PRES SHIINA THE DIRECT RESPONSIBILITY FOR ACHIEVING LDP CONSENSUS ON ISSUE. NEXT BIG HURDLE MIKI MUST SURMOUNT IS EXPERTS COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION WHICH MAY BE ISSUED BY MIDDLE OF NOV. WHATEVER THE RECOMMENDATION, MIKI WILL HAVE TO KEEP LDP SPEAKING WITH ONE VOICE ON ISSUE, THEREBY MAINTAINING FACADE OF PARTY UNITY UNTIL UPPER HOUSE PASSES PRICE INCREASE BILLS AND EXTRAORDINARY DIET SESSION ADJOURNS. THE STRIKE ISSUE THUS LOOMS AS ANOTHER MAJOR TEST FOR THE MIKI CABINET.

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